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SUBJECT: SE NATSIOS DISCUSSES SUDAN, CHAD C.A.R. WITH
FRENCH OFFICIALS (SEPTEMBER 15)

REF: STATE 128495

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, 1.4 (b/d
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¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Special Envoy for Sudan Andrew Natsios discussed Darfur and related issues with French officials on September 15. Both sides agreed that Abdulwahid el-Nur's continued failure to participate in peace talks, including the October 27 meeting in Libya, posed serious problems, and discussed ways of encouraging his participation, which included funding structured in such a way to ensure his attendance but to limit his ability to use the funding to buy arms. The French supported SE Natsios's idea to include other Fur leaders at the upcoming Darfur talks in Libya. Both sides agreed that Libya was not the ideal site for the October 27 talks and that there had to be adequate assurances that the international community would be allowed a sufficient presence at the meeting.

¶2. (C) SUMMARY CONTINUED: The French said that the September 21 Darfur meeting on the margins of the UNGA would likely feature a broader group of attendees than had the June 25 Paris meeting. The two sides agreed on the need for a strong UN Special Envoy (currently Jan Eliasson) and that the position should perhaps be converted to a full-time job. Issues pertaining to South Sudan, while not directly a part of the Darfur issue, could not be ignored because of their repercussions in Darfur. Both sides agreed that China was playing an increasingly positive role, which should be broadened to include North-South issues and the CPA. The French agreed that it might be better to limit Egypt's participation in UNAMID (this following an Egyptian offer of 3,000 troops) as an enhanced "Arab" presence might not sit well with Darfurians. On the EU-led mission for Chad and C.A.R., the French noted differences with the U.S. on funding Chadian gendarmes who would participate in the mission; the U.S. said it would do what it could to encourage Europeans to contribute troops, especially Sweden (which the French said could be offered command of the EU force if it decided to participate and contribute a good share of the necessary personnel).

¶3. (C) SUMMARY CONTINUED: The U.S. side raised the issue of the imminent departure of AEC Chairman Vraalsen and the need to find a good replacement for him. The French said they would study the issue, agreeing on the need for an effective AEC to oversee the CPA. They shared the U.S. perception that the AEC was operating under undue constraints. As a final point, both sides agreed on the need to bolster the cease-fire mechanism in Darfur and possibly establish a cease-fire monitoring mechanism, perhaps to be

incorporated into UNAMID, in an effort to improve the existing cease-fire system, which was continuing to break down. END SUMMARY.

14. (C) Special Envoy for Sudan Andrew Natsios, accompanied by USAID Assistant Administrator for Africa Kate Almquist, Embassy Pol Chief Rosenblatt, and Embassy notetaker, met with French officials at the MFA on September 15 to discuss Darfur and related issues. Eric Chevallier (Crisis and Conflict Advisor to FM Bernard Kouchner), Jean de Glinasty (MFA AF A/S-equivalent), Sylvie Bermann (MFA IO A/S-equivalent), Helene Le Gal (MFA AF DAS-equivalent), Charlotte Montel (an MFA AF advisor to FM Kouchner), and Frederic Bouvier (MFA Sudan Desk Officer) comprised the French delegation.

Abdulwahid el-Nur

15. (C) After opening pleasantries, during which Chevallier regretted FM Kouchner's absence because of his demanding travel schedule, SE Natsios noted Abdulwahid el-Nur's continuing refusal to participate in peace talks, notably the meeting in Libya scheduled for October 27. Yet, SE Natsios noted, Abdulwahid never offered a coherent plan of his own or rationale for his refusal to cooperate. SE Natsios remarked that Abdulwahid's communications system seemed good and that he maintained close contact with his associates. Abdulwahid's failure to participate could scuttle the talks.

16. (C) Crisis and Conflict Advisor Chevallier said that the GOF met with Abdulwahid frequently. He noted (and SE Natsios agreed) that Abdulwahid continued to enjoy strong popular support among Darfurians, particularly among members of the Fur ethnic group (70 percent approval). AF A/S Glinasty noting Abdulwahid's love of "pomp and circumstance,"

PARIS 00003942 002 OF 005

suspected that he needed money and that if he received funding, he might attend the Libya talks. Providing support to him would be difficult for France, Glinasty commented, referring to GOF budget constraints. AF DAS Le Gal referred to information suggesting that Abdulwahid wanted money to buy arms, with SE Natsios noting the risk that Abdulwahid could take money but still not attend the Libya talks. Chevallier offered the possibility of paying him in installments, or making the money available only if Abdulwahid attended the talks. He said that Abdulwahid needed the money to show his status and to pay for his travel and communications needs. In any case, whatever funding he received must not be used to buy arms. SE Natsios and the French agreed that Abdulwahid was adept at finding excuses for his lack of cooperation, complaining on the one hand of being excluded and not consulted, but then refusing entreaties to participate. SE Natsios noted this his apparent "Messiah complex" had led him into intractable positions that he could not change without losing standing among his supporters.

17. (C) Chevallier said that Abdulwahid's demand of "security before peace" was not realistic. Glinasty said the French had repeatedly asked Abdulwahid for a list of requirements which, if met, would allow his participation. He had offered a paper that Glinasty said was worthless. He has been asked to provide a second paper, but Glinasty did not expect it to be much better. He noted Abdulwahid's tendency to change his markers, at one point insisting on "a certain degree of cease-fire," which then became "a complete cease-fire." Glinasty said the French had suggested that Abdulwahid come up with a reasonable plan the French could support so that his attendance at the Libya talks could be announced by September 21 (the date of the Darfur Ministerial meeting to take place on the margins of the UNGA). Glinasty was not optimistic that Abdulwahid would do so.

18. (C) Chevallier commented that, despite all of Abdulwahid's baggage, he remained a key element of the Darfur problem, with no alternatives to him in clear view. SE Natsios did not completely share this view, noting that there

were other potential credible representatives, based on his recent visit to one large IDP camp. Much of the problem rested with the Fur, who comprised about 70 percent of those in the camps. When asked who they viewed as their leader, responses tended to break on ethnic lines, with Abdulwahid enjoying about 65 percent of the vote, in SE Natsios's rough estimation.

¶9. (C) But so too did Ahmad Ibrahim Diraige, who had gained prominence some 25 years previously but who still conducted conference calls with Fur leaders. SE Natsios noted the Fur tendency to follow a leader, whereas among the Zaghawa, everyone viewed himself as a leader. Diraige was not a likely substitute for Abdulwahid, but his presence worried Abdulwahid. It would be useful if Diraige and others could at least be heard in the camps. AA Almquist noted Khartoum's firm control over the media throughout northern Sudan, which has also been an issue for disseminating information about the DPA. Chevallier noted that the UN could broadcast in the DRC and that this had worked well. Gliniasty said that access to the media could be an agenda item for the September 21 meeting, with Chevallier adding that he favored SE Natsios's idea to broaden Fur representation at the talks in Libya to include a range of leaders representing the IDPs.

Libya Meeting

¶10. (C) SE Natsios said that UN Special Envoy for Darfur Jan Eliasson was not pleased with Sudan's neighbors and the options for holding the GOS-rebel peace talks. AU Chairman Konare had insisted on Libya. Chevallier said that Konare, Sudan President Bashir, and Libya President Qadhafi had made the deal, with the AU then pressuring the UN to accept it. Chevallier regretted that concerned parties such as France and the U.S. had not had a voice in selecting the site for the talks. Gliniasty agreed and said that the selection typified Konare's and Qadhafi's tendencies to try to exclude the West and UN from Africa. Le Gal said that there appeared to be limits on attendance by observers (U.S., EU, Asia, other Africans); SE Natsios said there must be some assurance of Western participation. AA Almquist stressed the importance of key powers within the international community attending the talks, which had been necessary during the cease-fire meetings in N'djamena in order to even convince the rebels to participate. A Western presence could also allow leverage and recourse to a balancing mechanism between

PARIS 00003942 003 OF 005

the GOS and rebels.

September 21 Darfur Follow-On Conference

¶11. (C) When asked about the structure of the September 21 Darfur meeting on the margins of the UNGA, Chevallier acknowledged that participation had expanded considerably beyond the June 25 Darfur conference in Paris that the French had hosted. Attendees now were likely to include, in addition to those present in Paris, Chad, Eritrea, Saudi Arabia, G-8 countries, and others. Chevallier said the French wanted the September 21 meeting to replicate the June 25 meeting in terms of attendees, but that Konare had rejected this.

¶12. (C) Concerning the UN and Darfur, Chevallier said that the UN Special Envoy's position needed to be a full-time commitment. This would help keep the AU from taking over the Darfur account. The French had raised this with current UN SE Eliasson. IO A/S Bermann commented on difficulties the AU had been presenting and expressed concerns about Konare. SE Natsios raised Qadhafi as a source of concern. It was hard to determine Qadhafi's ultimate goal and Darfur's part in it. His manipulations were consistent with his notions of pan-Africanism but how Darfur specifically played into that was not clear. Chevallier said that all of these concerns underlined the need for the UN SE to be a full-time presence. SE Natsios expressed general agreement with Chevallier's

point, commenting that Eliasson had other duties in Sweden. If the UN SE position remained part-time, the SE would have to be a strong one. A weak part-timer would not do. Chevallier agreed, saying that he was not proposing a drastic change but that the position had to be more effective. Sudan Desk Officer Bouvier observed that Qadhafi would take advantage of a weak UN SE, especially if the October 27 talks took place in Sirte, access to which would be difficult. Both sides again regretted Libya's and Qadhafi's role in the talks but noted that it would be quite unlikely for UNSYG Ban to change his position on Libya's hosting the talks after having made his announcement.

South Sudan

113. (C) Chevallier asked about the Government of South Sudan's role in Darfur. SE Natsios responded that the GOSS was not always helpful and tended to carry out Eritrea's foreign policy with respect to Darfur. Chevallier said the French had spoken with GOSS Vice-President Riek Machar, whom he described as "tense" during his recent visit to Paris to meet with Abdulwahid. Gliniasty said that it was perhaps fortunate that nothing so far had come of GOSS efforts to reach out to Abdulwahid since these efforts were only focused on getting him to talks in Juba, not necessarily to UN/AU talks in Libya. Gliniasty urged caution and said that the SPLM's position had become ambiguous. SE Natsios referred to the recent North-South confrontation at Abyei, which, if the situation worsened, could put the CPA at risk. This issue should not be a part of the Darfur talks but one could not ignore matters pertaining to the South in the Darfur context. A failure to implement the CPA would not bode well for implementing a Darfur peace agreement.

China

114. (C) SE Natsios commented on China's increasingly helpful role, which had so far been restricted to Darfur. It would be useful to involve China in the CPA. Chinese Special Representative for Darfur, Liu Guijin, had noted that GOSS President Salva Kiir had gone to China in July and reportedly surprised PRC officials by saying that "all of Sudan's oil is in the South," a point not lost on PRC President Hu. The PRC position was thus evolving, SE Natsios believed, and China was becoming increasingly worried about the possibility of a North-South separation in 2011, which could affect its various commercial arrangements.

Egypt and Darfur

115. (C) Gliniasty asked SE Natsios's views on Egyptian involvement in Darfur, describing the recent statement to the French by Egypt's Ambassador that Egypt was ready to contribute 3,000 troops to UNAMID, but that the UN had indicated that it did not want/need Egyptian troops. Instead, there seemed to be a need for helicopters. SE Natsios replied that he could understand the UN's reluctance, based on the likelihood that Darfurians would resent the

PARIS 00003942 004.2 OF 005

presence of "Arab" elements among the peacekeepers perceived to be favorable to the GOS. There was general agreement that consideration of an Egyptian role in Darfur should take this factor into account.

EU Operation in Chad and C.A.R.

116. (C) Chevallier said that on September 14, the French had circulated a new draft UNSC Resolution to SC members, which, he said, took into account U.S. concerns about the previous draft, largely over the issue of funding Chadian gendarmes who would take part in the mission. SE Natsios expressed U.S. support for the operation, and remarked that he had done so publicly after consultations in Germany. Such an operation would send a strong signal to Bashir. Chevallier noted the operation's deterrent role with respect

to the Sudan side of the borders.

¶17. (C) Chevallier said that the main obstacle concerned funding the Chadian gendarmes, with the U.S. preferring that funding come from voluntary contributions rather than assessments. For the French, however, finding resources would be difficult, even though the U.S. had indicated that it would make a strong voluntary contribution. The European Commission had told the French it could provide money for training and recruiting the gendarmes but not for equipment or salaries. Chevallier said that he hoped this issue could be resolved early in the week of September 17, with a solution in place before the September 21 Darfur meeting in New York. We noted that USG experts in Washington were aware of U.S.-France differences on this issue and were working hard to resolve the matter.

¶18. (C) As for the operation itself, Chevallier said that Qadhafi was not causing problems because Chad President Deby supported it. The mission enjoyed EU political support. However, work would have to be done to secure troop commitments. Chevallier said France would provide over half the troops ("we don't want the mission to be TOO French") and was canvassing other Europeans for contributions. He said that the U.S. could play a useful role in encouraging Europeans to provide troops. Austria was reluctant but he believed that the Netherlands, Poland, Norway, and especially Sweden could be persuaded. He stressed Sweden's key role. The UK and Germany were unlikely contributors because of their commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan. SE Natsios said that the U.S. would do what it could to encourage troop contributions and that he would try to discuss the matter with Carl Bildt. Chevallier confided that France was considering offering Sweden command of the force if it came aboard and offered troops.

Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC)

¶19. (C) SE Natsios raised the AEC, its oversight of the CPA, and the imminent departure (December 1) of Chairman Tom Vraalsen, and he and AA Almquist discussed the problems Vraalsen and the AEC had been having (which Vraalsen discussed with DepSec Negroponte on September 5 (reftel)). There was a need to ensure that a competent replacement for Vraalsen succeeded him. AA Almquist noted the likelihood that Norway would seek to offer a replacement, and discussed complications posed to the AEC's operations by the National Congress Party (NCP), which had to agree (along with the SPLM) to anything the AEC proposed. Le Gal said the French had the impression that Vraalsen was effectively rendered unable to speak his mind. AA Almquist agreed that the AEC had become very constrained, making it difficult to oversee the CPA, but that the AEC mechanism still, at least, brought people to the table. The demise of the AEC could have unforeseeable effects on the CPA, North-South issues, and even the Libya talks. AA Almquist noted Kenya's interest in South Sudan but that Kenya tended to defer to Khartoum because of IGAD-related issues.

¶20. (C) Gliniasty asked how France could help. AA Almquist said the two most important issues for the international members were finding a replacement for Vraalsen and improving AEC procedures in order to ensure the AEC's independence. France was not a member of the AEC, but the EU had observer status and so France's input would be important in that regard. Chevallier said the French would study the issue. Bouvier thought that if the Darfur peace process worked, it could serve as a model for reinvigorating the CPA. AA Almquist said that Italy was considering a high-level meeting, perhaps at ministerial level, in Rome to review

PARIS 00003942 005 OF 005

implementation of the CPA. She said that reinvigorating the CPA process could also serve to help address all of Sudan's problems. AA Almquist predicted that the U.S. would raise the issue of CPA implementation on September 21, although the

issues surrounding the AEC would most likely be discussed in a smaller side meeting. Bouvier said the French planned to put these issues on their own agenda for the meeting.

Darfur Cease-Fire

¶21. (C) Gliniasty said that as a final point he wanted to raise the failure of the cease-fire in Darfur, which the French had discussed with Konare, who had asserted that the cease-fire was good but needed to be improved. However, in Gliniasty's view, the cease-fire was breaking down, with chaos ensuing. If the political talks yielded results, one of them should be on the cease-fire, and any provisions on an improved cease-fire should be implemented quickly. Konare had said that what was needed was an information network to allow the center to know what was happening and who was responsible. Gliniasty said the French were considering proposing the establishment of a cease-fire monitoring mechanism to monitor and to respond to violations, and would raise this for discussion at the September 21 meeting. Bouvier said that a good mechanism would allow better understanding of events on the ground. SE Natsios pointed out a recent incident where it appeared that Khalil Ibrahim's forces had killed 40 police, in part to prove that he still played a role and that the cease-fire commission had little authority. Bouvier said that UNAMID could incorporate cease-fire monitoring issues within its area of responsibility.

COMMENT

¶22. (C) The discussion with the French was productive and positive, with both sides expressing general agreement on all issues and offering constructive suggestions on ways to move forward. The only significant point of divergence concerned the Chad/C.A.R. UNSC resolution and the issue of funding the Chadian gendarmes. The French were willing to discuss all issues and were eager for USG views as we approach the September 21 meeting, which the French will have a strong hand in running, although it will be formally sponsored by the UN and AU. Along with several other indications we have received since the arrival of the Sarkozy government, this meeting demonstrated a very positive attitude on the part of the French to work with the USG on issues of shared concern.
END COMMENT.

¶23. (U) SE Natsios has cleared this message.

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Stapleton